

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family
Independence
Agency

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Structured Decision Making -- a success

State officials, researchers declare foster care system a triumph

LANSING—An evaluation of Michigan's foster care "Structured Decision Making" case management system called it a success for children and foster care families. FIA director Douglas E. Howard and state Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura Corrigan made the announcement during a Nov. 29 news conference.

"The evaluation measures the permanency rate, or the percentage of children who achieve permanency 15 months after their entry into foster care," said Howard. "The results show Structured Decision Making case management procedures help move foster children into a permanent placement more quickly (than

comparative measures). That's good news for Michigan children and their families."

The evaluation was conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's Children's Research Center in Madison, Wisc. It compared pilot sites in outstate counties and Wayne County contract agencies.

"Many people deserve to share the credit for this success," Howard said, "including judges, FIA and private agency staff, and the children and families they serve."

The evaluation showed pilot sites had significantly higher permanency rates for new foster care cases than equivalent comparison agencies. Structured Decision Making sites were also more successful in achieving each of the four types of permanency—termination of parental rights and adoption, return home, permanent placement with a family member or guardian, or other permanent arrangement such as independent living.

Structured Decision Making employs procedures to evaluate child and family needs, develop appropriate case plans, identify and focus services, evaluate case progress and set standards for changing permanency planning goals. Structured Decision Making evaluation tools assess:

- Safety of the child if returned home (Safety Assessment).
- Strengths and needs of the child (Child Assessment of Needs and Strengths).
- Strengths and needs of the family (Family Assessment of Needs and Strengths).

These evaluation tools are used at the appropriate decision points during the child's foster care stay.



Department of Information Technology (former FIA) employee Willie Minor (right) was cited for special honor during a Nov. 13 staff meeting of the FIA Information Technology Services Administration staff. Minor's efforts resulted in refund of overpayments to AT&T of more than \$140,000 with more to come. He is shown with FIA director Douglas Howard holding a replica of the first refund check from AT&T.

Branch County Job Fair and Career Expo

By Cheryl Downs, Project Zero Coordinator
Branch County Family Independence Agency, Coldwater
Telephone (517) 279-4251

COLDWATER—The Dearth Center, a beautiful new community center located on the Branch County Fairgrounds, was the site of the first annual Branch County Job Fair and Career Expo.

The event was held in conjunction with Michigan Works!



Agency Job seekers filling out applications at the event.

partners, the Branch County Chamber of Commerce and the Branch County Economic Growth Alliance. It was a very successful culmination of several months of planning.

The Branch County Family Independence Agency Board and Project Zero helped fund the Job Fair Career Expo.

One hundred seventy-one registered job seekers were able to speak with 23 area employers, eight service agency personnel representatives, and representatives from three educational institutions. Job seekers hailed from several surrounding counties as well as Indiana. Applications were completed at the Fair and given to the employers. Interviews were conducted and some of the participants walked out with jobs.

There were many compliments written on the exit surveys as job seekers said: "Very enlightening to have so many companies especially for those who don't know where to look." said one.

"I felt like I accomplished more than I have in a while," another said. "The Job Fair is an excellent idea in helping people and making them feel more confident in job searching."

The employers were treated to a nice lunch in the comfortable atmosphere of the Dearth Center. The employers completed exit surveys and some of their comments were: "Fair was excellent. Thank you for the opportunity to participate." "Well organized, no changes needed." "Good Job Fair! Good location. Good turnout." "When is the next one?!" "Great turnout and the help was fantastic." "Nice environment. Non-threatening-very comfortable: All of you at Michigan Works! are doing wonderful work and I thank you."

Plans are already under way for the 2002 Branch County Job Fair and Career Expo.



Branch County staff (left-right) Mary Calligan, Carolyn Rosario, Kristi Gatke and Cheryl Downs.



FIA Icon

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Family Independence Agency

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



2001 Safety Summit

Confirming safety efforts in the FIA

I attended the second "Safety Summit" Nov. 28, a time when we as an agency review efforts to ensure employee safety. As a result of the first Safety Summit in May 2000, we created awards for FIA offices that demonstrated the greatest efforts to improve employee safety. During this year's event it was my pleasure to give awards that were objectively judged by the Office of State Employer's health and safety coordinator.

Selection criteria for safety awards included management leadership and commitment; employee involvement; measurement; accountability; clearly defined safety roles and expectations mechanisms to identify and eliminate risks and hazards; the identification and recognition of accomplishments; and training.

Winner of the first annual "Safety Awareness Week Award" was Marquette County. Julia Hadas accepted the award for the county office that reflects the best key elements of safety. Why? The Health and Safety Committee and the director work as a team. Employee input on safety issues is encouraged. Reducing the probability of injuries is a priority. Mechanisms to identify, reduce or eliminate risks are in place and in use. Their cooperation with outside agencies is commendable. Best of all, they say they're having a good time making their working environment safer.

Berrien County took the "Second Place" award. Berrien County's personal safety and security program is a best practice method. Management commitment to employees and an exceptional working arrangement with local law enforcement are remarkable in Berrien County. Tim Fenderbosch accepted the award for the county.

Lenawee County received "Honorable Mention" for outstanding management support and employee involvement including year round focus on safety. Terry Beurer accepted for the county.

Lake and Mason counties also received "Honorable Mention". Their director and safety committee members work year round on safety issues and employees regularly identify and eliminate risks and hazards. They also use safety slogans and extensively use safety posters. Rick Trier and Jeanne Madison accepted the award.

I believe it important to acknowledge the value FIA programs and staff play in Michigan. Since Lisa Putman's death in 1998, we have made worker safety a priority in the Family Independence Agency. We added communications tools, upgraded other equipment and began new field training. The Michigan Legislature passed "Lisa's law" legislation making it a crime to impersonate, threaten or harm an FIA employee and requiring new safety training for field workers.

Thanks for your help in making safety part of the FIA's way of doing business.

Monroe County woman is 95th FIA achiever

Mother of three overcomes obstacles, demonstrates outstanding progress toward success

By Helena McPherson, Project Zero Coordinator
Monroe County Family Independence Agency, Monroe
Telephone (734) 243-7291

MONROE—On Oct. 30 FIA deputy director Mark Jasonowicz presented the October Achiever of the Month award to Krystina Wallace of Luna Pier during a ceremony at the Monroe County Intermediate School District.

Jasonowicz presided over the event attended by many including staff from Monroe County FIA and their Work First partner, Southeast Michigan Community Alliance Michigan Work! Together, they celebrated Krystina's successful transition from welfare to work.

"Krystina was determined not to make public assistance a legacy for her children," said Jasonowicz as he presented her award.

During the ceremony Teri Ambs, a representative for state Sen. Bev Hammerstrom of Temperance, presented Krystina with a signed proclamation from Hammerstrom, state Rep. Randy Richardville of Monroe and Gov. John Engler.

This award and plaudits acknowledge the many achievements of Krystina Wallace, a former public assistance recipient who demonstrated remarkable progress toward independence from public assistance despite significant barriers.

Starting a new life

In 1997, this single mother moved about as far as you can in Michigan—from Wakefield in the western Upper Peninsula to Monroe County—to start a new life. Krystina had grown up in the U.P. community and liked the area. However, her primary reason for relocating was to allow her children to be closer to their grandparents, who lived in Monroe County.

Krystina is the single mother of three—Monica, age 5, Anthony, age 3, and Samuel, 23 months. The last four years have not been easy for her or her family.

Initially, the move did not appear to be a successful step for Krystina's family. At that time, she was pregnant with her second child, unemployed and needed help with food and health care. In addition, Krystina was put on bed rest while pregnant with Samuel. When he was born two years ago he required two heart surgeries and extensive medical treatment.

In September 1997, despite reservations, Krystina applied to the Monroe County FIA for assistance. Through the FIA she received Family Independence Program, Food Assistance and Medicaid benefits.

Over the years Krystina had worked at several jobs and been on and off of public assistance. Her lack of job skills made it difficult for her to find employment that paid enough to meet her family's needs.

Through Michigan Works!, Krystina was enrolled in a licensed practical nursing program at the Toledo School of Practical Nursing in Ohio. Work First provided her with uniforms and assisted in paying for her state boards, which she passed.

During her ceremony, Marilyn Beste, a placement-retention specialist for Michigan Works!,



To Strengthen Michigan Families

Achiever of the Month

presented Krystina with a portfolio and said: “What a wonderful customer Krystina has been. Every time I went to her school she was stressed out, but she did it. She also got 95 percent on her grades. I hope all the customers I have in the future are like Krystina.”

Learning a new skill

While pursuing her schooling, the FIA helped with child day care and later, when the family needed to relocate to find housing, by providing State Emergency Relief.

In May 2001, Krystina graduated from the LPN program and took her test for certification Oct. 24. She now works part-time at the Tender Care Nursing Home in Monroe. Upon receipt of her LPN certification, she will become a full-time employee.

Krystina’s goals are to become a registered nurse and then a physician’s assistant. She’d like to work with cardiac and pediatric patients.

Her cash assistance case closed June 30 due to earnings. The family receives transitional Medicaid, which can last up to one year after FIP closure.

Clarissa Thomas is the family independence specialist at Monroe FIA who worked with Krystina.

“Krystina was a joy to work with,” Clarissa said. “She used the program the way it was set up to be used. Krystina wanted it. That made all the difference.”

While addressing the audience, Krystina spoke to Marilyn Beste and Clarissa Thomas through tears. “You guys helped me out a lot when I needed it and I appreciate it very much,” she said. “Thank you.”

Since her achievements have been published, other agencies have called Monroe FIA and requested Krystina speak at their meetings. She is a representative spokeswoman for the success a person can achieve working toward their goals with the assistance of caring people.



Krystina Wallace with FIA deputy director Mark Jasonowicz at her ceremony in Monroe Oct. 30.



Krystina and three who helped (l-r) Ken Colpaert, welfare reform coordinator, and Marilyn Beste, placement-retention specialist, both from Southeast Michigan Community Alliance Michigan Works!, and Clarissa Thomas, family independence specialist from Monroe County FIA.

During the ceremony, Monroe County FIA director Angie Jenerette presented Krystina with a gift from the FIA staff. “You breathe life into the program,” said Jenerette. “When we look at Krystina we actually see what we are doing – we are not just doing programs. We are helping people.”

Back to class with a smile

Clothing benefit helps customers and local retailers

By Julie Wiles, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Barry County Family Independence Agency, Hastings
Telephone (616) 948-3211

■ Michelle Seigo of Kent County FIA contributed to this story.

This was the third year the FIA provided an additional benefit to Family Independence Program customers to pay for school clothing. The back to school clothing initiative provides \$75 per child in FIP families to purchase clothes for the upcoming school year. Michigan legislators appropriated this money in the FIA budget for this purpose.

How this program works

In August, the clothing allowance money was deposited in customers' EBT (electronic) FIP account. Parents received a letter from FIA director Doug Howard, explaining how the "Back to School Clothing Allowance" was an important tool to help their children succeed in school, and that educators have long known that a child's self-esteem has a big impact on how well they do in school.

"Our school clothing allowance was designed to help your child start the first day of school with a good feeling about themselves and a good feeling about going to school," he said.

Jocelyn Vanda, executive assistant to the director and administrative director for FIA Volunteer Services, formed a committee to make the most of the clothing allowance. The goal of this committee was to collaborate with retailers to get generous enhancements in the clothing allowance for the children of our FIP customers. Committee members included Mark Hendges, Carolyn Frank, Cathy Rytlewski, Cleo Anthony, Diana Algra, David Mork, Mel Haga, Julie Wiles, Marcia Luther, Larry Goka, Patti Isaac, Sherry Miller, Maureen Sorbet, Janice Ferguson, and Michelle Seigo.

Buyer discounts

The work of this committee and volunteer services coordinators around the state involved contacts with Michigan apparel retailers such as Sears, Wal-Mart, Kohl's, Meijer, J.C. Penney, Kmart, Glik's, Fashion Bug, Payless Shoes, Shoe Carnival, Famous Footwear and others. After discussion with FIA representatives, many of the retailers provided enhanced discounts of up to 10-20 percent for our customers using clothing allowance dollars, allowing their one-time benefit to go farther for their children.

Of special importance this year was an improved delivery of services assisted by FIA Office of Communications and the Internet Team. This involved a web link for staff to access a list of all the retailers giving a "back to school clothing allowance" discount. It also provided a link to a list of FIA volunteer services coordinators who customers could contact if they had any questions about the program.

One family's experience

Cindy Schimpf of Kent County reported that her four children—Jeremiah, Stephanie, Michelle, and Kristi—appreciated the clothing allowance very much. They were able to buy pants, shirts, socks, shoes and school supplies for the new school year. In addition to the financial aspect, they were able to shop together as a family and were treated well by local retailers. They especially appreciated their experience at Kohl's where they found the staff to be very nice and helpful, and were able to get good deals for the older children who are a little more sensitive about their appearance.

Ms. Schimpf is in her last year of school and hopes she won't have to be on assistance for long. She said she had just started with FIA when she heard about the clothing allowance, and that it was a really nice surprise.



Kent County's Cindy Schimpf and her kids (a rare breed, but the cat is not one of them) benefited from the clothing allowance.



Intercepted letters

Date: Nov. 12
To: Doug Howard
Subj: Youth Low Vision Program

I would first like to thank you for all the help you have given my son. Because of this program, my son has been given the chance to own glasses with bifocals, magnifiers, hand-held telescopes and now possibly special glasses with bioptic telescopes. Not to mention all the help that he has received with training to use these aides. I can't thank Linda Allgeyer, Downriver coordinator, or Dr. Gormezano enough for all their patience and understanding in helping Dan adjust to new vision aides.

My son, Dan, is now 16 years old. He has been in the Youth Low Vision since elementary school. It's taken him time and a lot of training with the Youth Low Vision but it's all paying off. Dan is an honor roll student at Roosevelt High School in Wyandotte. At our parent-teacher conferences this past week, each teacher said how wonderful Dan is doing. He participates in class, works hard, always on time and a joy to be around. I am very proud of my son. He also has decided to go on to college after high school graduation. I think, because of this program, he has been given a chance of freedom and sight to do whatever he wants to do. This summer he will be given the chance to take drivers' training. Again, because of your program, you make this possible for him.

Thank you so much for all your help. I only hope this program can continue. There are so many wonderful children out in the world and giving them this chance in life is the most wonderful thing you could possibly do for them. Also, you must know each and every one of us parents appreciates the financial help more than you will ever know. God bless.

Dawn Henderson

Proud parent of a visually impaired child – Dan Henderson

Wyandotte

■ Michigan Commission for the Blind administers the Youth Low Vision Program.

Date: Nov. 8
To: FIA Icon
Subj: Turnabout

I was discussing a particularly troubling case one afternoon with our office's program manager. As with many problem cases, the person involved had written to Doug Howard claiming all sorts of "irregularities" [my word] in the way we handled her case. We all know, however, that troubled people and troubling cases come with the territory in which we have chosen to work.

It is refreshing, then, when we hear that someone's troubles are diminished by what we do individually and collaboratively. The program manager in Allegan County passed on the following to me. It is the text of "A note of thanks" received by Norma Tirado, a family independence specialist in Allegan County. The other people referenced are Deb Dilworth from Allegan County Early Education Services and Sarah Hennighburg from Allegan County Community Mental Health.

"This is a letter of appreciation...I would like to recognize Deb Dilworth for her patience and compassion in regards to my dilemma. I had back surgery Feb. 22. It left me emotionally drained and physically disabled. I could not take care of myself or especially the children. Sarah Hennighburg suggested I take my Paxil, an antidepressant, to help my emotional state of mind. Deb Dilworth gave me emotional support by visiting me and encouraging me. She gave her full attention to my concerns. Also I would like to thank Norma Tirado for listening to my story and efficiently sending the paperwork so that I could apply for help. Whenever I was confused about something I would just give Norma a phone call. I knew she would be patient and understanding of my confusion. Thank you to those people who work behind the scenes for Allegan County. This county cares, really cares about their people. Deb, Sarah, & Norma thank you - you are my heroes. If I were there I would give you each a big hug! In this envelope are pictures of my children that benefited from the program."

Thank you, Norma, for your great customer service and for contributing to the collaboration that exists within Allegan County human services agencies.

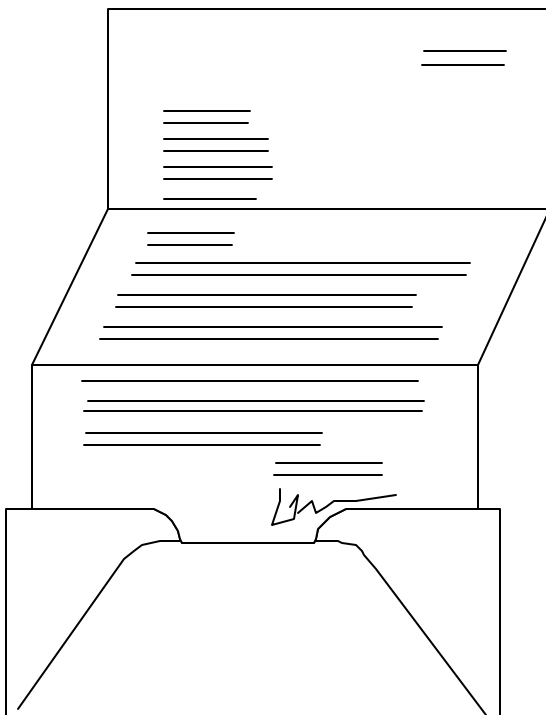
Susan Bailey-Carman, Director

Allegan County Family Independence Agency, Allegan

More intercepted letters

Date: Nov. 27
To: Doug Howard, FIA Director
Subj: The lives that you unknowingly affect

When I was seven years old, my mother choked me until I blacked out because I had knocked a piece of a board game off of the table. My last thought was that dying felt like sand. When I was eight years old, my mother met me at the door when I came home from school and told me to go away and never come back because they did not want me anymore. I wandered through the woods behind our house until dark, when their daughters came looking for me. With BB guns.



These are two of the less horrific stories that make up the first 14 years of my life. So it isn't my fault that I am in jail, typing this letter with hands shaking so badly from cocaine withdrawal that I have to keep backtracking and fixing what I write. It was my parents' fault. It was the government's fault. I am not responsible for killing someone for drug money. Oh...wait. Sorry. That isn't me.

Instead, I graduated from high school at the top of my class. I turned down a full scholarship to Michigan State to enlist in the hopes of finding my way into West Point, the premiere leadership school in the world. I graduated basic training and went to serve in the President's Honor Guard. I worked in the White House and met some of the most powerful people in the world. Then I got a senatorial nomination to the United States Military Academy, and have been here for two years, working toward my eventual commission as a leader in the United States Army. Harvard Law School is a hopeful future, and I have just met the most wonderful woman in the world. Did I mention that I am aspiring to the presidency? That wasn't a joke.

I do not remember much about the majority of my life. Last year in psychology we learned that the human brain subconsciously blocks out traumatic events to reduce stress. If I work hard, it all comes flooding back, but that hurts too much to be worth the effort. But what I do remember is my elementary school teacher caring enough to take me under his wing when I

wasn't getting fed at home. I remember the gentleman who came and took me away from my first adoptive home after the neighbor's called the police and reported abuse. I remember his name, what his office looked like, what he said to me, his phone conversations when I was in his office...I remember everything.

That was more than a decade ago. I remember the people that have stood up for me, cared enough to give me a second chance when I took the wrong turn...then a third chance, and a fourth, and as many as I needed to get myself straight. I remember my caseworkers...my social workers that weren't disillusioned with their jobs. The people who could look at me and I could swear that they knew every single thing that I had done wrong. My social worker when I had just landed in a group home and couldn't imagine life getting worse...she was only there for three months before moving to Virginia. But I remember her favorite song, her favorite ice cream...because she showed me that she cared. Those were my role models.

My caseworker from high school, whom I will cherish until the day he dies from old age, was like a father to me. He caught me when I tripped up. He shared in my joys. He flew down to Georgia for my graduation from basic training. When I had a new success to share with him, he always has had a single, all-encompassing phrase. "It's all you dude." He means my successes are attributable to my hard work and me.

continues on next page

I gave up years ago trying to make him understand. It isn't about me. It is about the people who cared enough to show me the way. I succeed because I had the tools to succeed. The choices I have made in life were mine, and have put me where I am today. But the tools that allowed me to make those choices were put there by people who cared enough to intercede.

Now, even after I am out of high school and in college, you cared enough to come to my aid. Enough people cared that I walked into my room two weeks ago and saw a cardboard box, fresh out of the mail sitting on my floor. Even after I am out of foster care, working my way through school, you cared enough to provide me another tool to succeed. Words don't express my gratitude.

Mr. Howard, thank you. To the others who have helped me so much in this...Jean Hoffman and Kate Young in Adoption Subsidy; (Michigan Children's Institute director) Bill Johnson, whom I pray gets to read this...he was instrumental in me getting in both the Army and West Point (I told you I don't forget!) and Bruce Hoffman, thank you. I owe so many people a thank you, people that I will never get a chance to meet. I do not know how to say thank you in a way that could even begin to express my feelings, so instead I make a point of impacting other people. Every bit of energy that has been channeled into me is multiplied ten fold and channeled back into my wish to help other people. I do not want to ever see anyone grow up like I did.

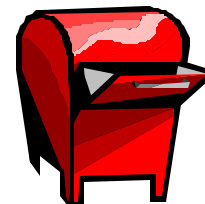
In closing, I offer this. I am not a unique case. I am not a one-in-a-million product of a caseworker. I am the result of enough people wanting to make a difference, who treated me as a special person and not a job. It seems like kids in the system are getting worse and worse over the years. Their workers are getting more and more embittered over the seeming inability to make a difference. Please...don't be that person. We can see it. There is a tangible difference between the social workers who came to see me because they truly cared, and those that came because it was time for a monthly visit. I got lucky enough to get enough people that truly cared that it did make a difference. Don't give up. Lives depend on it.

Being willing to listen isn't enough. I was a quiet kid. I never wanted to talk to my caseworkers. Instead, I sat and analyzed them; tried to confuse them. It took active engagement, and someone who could understand to get through to me. I won't ever forget. The people who cared enough to "truly" work for me have been my inspiration in life. Thank you.

Justin W. Hilderbrant

**United States Military Academy
West Point, N.Y.**

■ The author spent years in the FIA system. The people he thanks work in the FIA.



Date: Oct. 10

To: Vicky Sand, FIA Cashier's Unit

Subj: Sept. 11 Fund

I appreciate your willingness to help collect money for the New York United Way and victims of Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Your assistance in light of the busy fiscal year end is an indication of your commitment. Your help has not gone unnoticed. Thank you!

Karen Smith, Director

FIA Office of Communications, Lansing

■ Vicky Sand adds: "The original idea to offer our help was not mine. **Dianne Johnston of the Cashier Unit** made the suggestion to collect the NY Fund. I ran with it as supervisor and representative of the unit." Through Nov. 30 the Sept. 11 Fund posting on FIA-Net collected \$31,896 in donations.

FIA Leadership Academy

An effort to help develop tomorrow's leaders today

By Bill Patrick, Director
Office of Professional Development
Telephone (517) 373-9490
Email patrickb2@Michigan.gov

The FIA has embarked on a totally new effort – establishment of its first Leadership Academy, a new and exciting professional development opportunity for high potential employees who would like to develop in competency areas needed for top leadership positions at FIA. Leadership Academy participants are part of a pool designed to accelerate their development in preparation for leadership positions at FIA.

Demographics of the FIA work force indicate 25 percent of top leaders are eligible to retire. Within the next five years, 75 percent will be eligible. This made clear the need to immediately implement a strategy for succession planning.

With assistance from Development Dimensions International, the FIA Office of Professional Development worked with a broad-based team to develop a selection process for the first academy. The goal was to develop a process that would be fair and inclusive.

All managers and supervisors at any level—and everyone at the 13 level and above—were eligible to apply. Interested individuals reviewed a job preview and completed a job inventory, which provided confidential information to the applicant about how their ideal job compared to a typical FIA top leadership job. Afterward:

- 252 staff decided to continue the application process and filled out a self-nomination form. They then had to take a one-hour proctored

test, the leadership situational judgment inventory and were given training in how to fill out the experience profile that described their experience in various competency areas in great detail.

- 159 candidates completed both the inventory and profiles.

- 61 candidates were selected for interviews based on their

inventory and profile scores.

- FIA Executive Management Team made the final decisions on the 22 candidates selected for participation in the first FIA Leadership Academy based on scores as well as organizational need.

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The first Leadership Academy participants: *Front left:* Marianne Kern, Children's Protective Services supervisor, Oakland County FIA District 1; **Susan Doby**, applications software development supervisor, Department of Information Technology; **Sonia Latta**, Foster Care-Adoption supervisor, Wayne County FIA – CFS Central; **Mary Mehren**, administrative assistant, Child and Family Services Administration; **Shari Lemonious**, placement unit supervisor, Wayne County FIA – CFS Central; **Pamela McKee**, family independence manager, Genesee County FIA – Pierson Rd.

Middle from left: Annie Ray, Foster Care supervisor, Oakland County FIA – District V; **Tanda Reynolds**, Children's Protective Services supervisor, Jackson County FIA; **Jane Johnson**, program manager, Muskegon County FIA; **Kay Andrzejak**, program manager, Oakland County central administration; **Traci Lee-Brown**, Children's Protective Services supervisor, Western Wayne CFS.

Back from left: **Bernell Wiggins**, administrative assistant, Wayne County FIA; **John Tarkowski**, risk management manager, Wayne County FIA; **Pratin Trivedi**, security-financial services director, Department of Information Technology; **Aaron Pringle**, Quality Assurance section manager, Disability Determination Service; **Deborah Porter**, program manager, Zone 2 Office, Traverse City; **Gary Miller**, payment accuracy coordinator, Family Independence Services Administration; **Joe Kulpa**, family independence manager, Ingham County FIA; **Mary Chaliman**, Children's Services supervisor, Ingham County FIA; **Edward Michaels**, section manager, Western Wayne Child and Family Services; **Terrie Brownell**, family independence manager, Livingston County FIA; **Doug McCombs**, program manager, Alpena & Presque Isle County FIA.

FIA STRATEGIC PLAN

Word Search by Cindy Chapman, Genesee County

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Action Oriented
Business Plan
Customer Focus
Effective Partnerships
Employee Commitment
Human Service Delivery
Initiatives
Innovation
Integrity
Juvenile Justice Service

Long Term Focus
Meeting Employee Needs
Mission
National leader
Performance
Planning
Policy Development
Priorities
Protecting
Quality of Life

Resources
Staff Development
Strengthen Families
Strengthen Individuals
Teamwork
Technology
Values
Vision

FIA Leadership Academy *continued from page 10*

FIA director Doug Howard congratulated the participants and introduced them at the November Statewide Directors meeting. The next day they attended an orientation and were given developmental feedback from the selection process. They also were trained on the next assessment step—a multi-rater assessment that will assess them on the FIA Leadership Academy competencies. They will do a self-assessment and will also be evaluated by their manager, peers, direct reports and customers. In addition, an orientation meeting was held with supervisors of academy participants to orient them to the process and let them know how they can support the process.

Over the next two years, participants will receive mentoring, participate in action learning team projects, attend training and may be given short-term developmental assignments to work in different jobs. A new academy will be started next fall.

The Office of Professional Development would like to thank all candidates who applied to the academy. This was an extremely competitive process and the decision was not an easy one. Many candidates were qualified but with only 22 slots, the field had to be narrowed to the very top band of an overall exceptional pool of candidates.

All who applied were given feedback and ideas on how to develop the competency areas addressed by the selection process.

Those not selected this year are encouraged to apply next spring when the selection process will begin again. Since this is our first selection process, we are interested in learning from the experience and modifications to the process will be made next year based on candidate feedback.

For questions please contact Bill Patrick at the Office of Professional Development.

The Child Care Fund – A growing partnership

A major source of funding for FIA and Juvenile Courts in Michigan

By Sean Brady and Shelli Massey

FIA Bureau of Juvenile Justice, Lansing

Telephone (517) 335-6189

LANSING – The Child Care Fund is a collaborative effort between state and county governments that supports programs to serve neglected, abused, and delinquent youth in Michigan. The fund is a significant and growing resource for these services.

The Child Care Fund originated in 1955 with a series of “foster care bills”. They were designed to improve care for children under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts by allowing the state to participate in covering costs.

At first, CCF assistance was limited to youth in out-of-home placements such as foster homes or county-operated facilities. In recent years, the CCF has added the ability to fund in-home care services. These programs have the goal of providing necessary services while allowing children to remain in their own homes. Alternatively, in-home care may focus on allowing youth already in out-of-home placements to make an early return to their home. This approach allows for a large degree of county control and initiative and as a result, a wide variety of creative services have been approved for funding by the state Child Care Fund.

In-home care programs

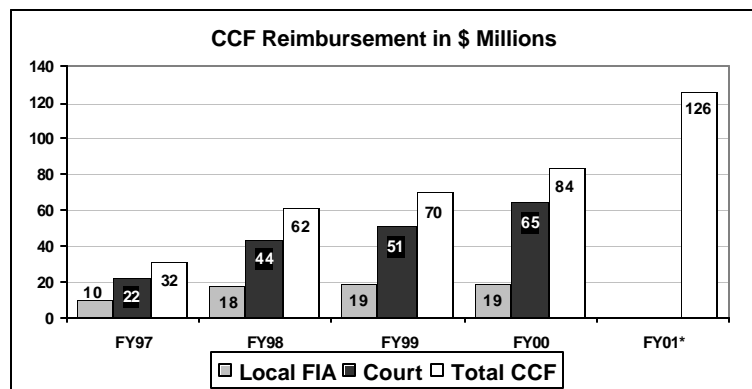
In-home care programs include job skills training, intensive probation, community wraparound, mentoring, family counseling, electronic tether and other community-based services. These services can be funded completely with CCF county money for a 50 percent state match. County Child Care Fund money can also be combined with other local, state or federal money to pay for services. The state would then reimburse only the Child Care funded portion of the program. These community-based programs have provided many youth and their families the benefit of a more stable environment and have also reduced the need for expensive institutional placement.

The Child Care Fund also continues to support out-of-home placements where appropriate. Some specialized services and security can only be provided in a residential setting. If the safety of the youth, the youth’s family or the community is at risk, then an out-of-home placement may be required. The CCF supports a variety of out-of-home placements including foster homes, county-operated detention facilities, and a wide range of private child caring institutions.

Whether providing in-home or out-of-home care, the programs supported by the CCF are designed and administered by Michigan’s county courts and local FIA offices. The services are paid for by county funds and then submitted for reimbursement to the state Child Care Fund Office, part of the FIA Child and Family Services Administration.

County eligibility

To be eligible to receive CCF reimbursement, each county must submit an annual plan and budget to the state. The budgets are reviewed and approved by the CCF office. Each county must submit a detailed list of the services they wish to provide as well as a projection of anticipated expenditures. Each



continues next page

The Child Care Fund *continued from page 12*

county must also undergo periodic on-site reviews by Child Care Fund staff to assure that program expenditures comply with CCF rules and policy.

To be eligible for reimbursement, in-home care programs must serve youth who are:

- Either category I or II neglect or abuse cases or delinquent youth under the jurisdiction of the court and;
- Either at risk of being placed out of the home or have a goal of early return from placement.

Between 1980-97 the state annually placed a cap on the amount of CCF reimbursement available to each county. The state would match county expenditures only up to a fixed dollar amount and any expenses beyond that limit were the county's responsibility. In July 1997 the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that this cap was illegal under the terms of the Headlee amendment.

Following this decision, the cap was removed and the state now reimburses counties for 50 percent for all eligible CCF costs. Since that time, the Child Care Fund has grown from a relatively small program into a major funding source for FIA local offices and county Juvenile Courts. CCF reimbursement has increased from \$32 million in fiscal year 1997 to \$126 million in fiscal year 2001 and is projected to approach \$135 million in fiscal year 2002.

The Child Care Fund is now supporting programs ranging from foster care and institutional care to independent living, and a multitude of in-home care programs. By combining county control of programming with the significant state financial assistance and oversight, the CCF will continue to assist in serving neglected, abused, and delinquent youth and their families throughout Michigan.

For more information on the Child Care Fund, contact the program office at (517) 335-6317.

North Central CFS family reunification picnic

By Gene Hashley, Communications Director
Wayne County Family Independence Agency, Detroit
Telephone (313) 256-1560

DETROIT—It was a real carnival. There were hot dogs and cotton candy and games, lots of games and prizes, and a clown that made animals and hats from balloons.

The carnival was the annual family reunification picnic hosted by North Central Child and Family Services, one of Wayne County's five CFS districts. It was held in the district's parking lot. In the past it has been held in a city park.



Jolene Jones (above) with sons JoVonne, age 8, and Justin, 6, at the picnic. CFS staff, families and children had fun with games and other cool stuff at the reunification picnic.

According to district manager Regina Powdrill, this is at least the tenth year the district has hosted the picnic for children and their families that are close to being reunited. More than 250 people attended.

The North Central staff, along with volunteers from Wayne County's general service districts, cooked the hog dogs, made the cotton candy and staffed all of the games and attractions. The GSA districts also contributed some money.

One of the major sponsors of the event is the Budco Corporation in Highland Park. Co-chairs of the 2001 event were Kyra Jones and Demetrius Starling.

Are we “Hooked on Excellence”?

Moving from seeing FIA’s vision to committing to it, being it and coaching it

By Julie Horn Alexander

FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management

Telephone (517) 373-4659

From July through November 2001, FIA management teams participated in 23 “Hooked on Excellence” regional leadership conferences held across the state. These interactive and highly participatory



Way back in August, this group of Houghton-Keweenaw FIA employees met in Silver City. Pictured from left are Jim Aebli, Dan Heinonen, Susan Hood, Julie Kent, Dennis Racine and Dan Whitman.

sessions were designed by the Teaming for Excellence Steering Team and the Office of Reengineering & Quality Management in consultation with Colleen Cooper and David Shevrin of New Perspectives Group, Inc. Thirty-seven Teaming for Excellence trained facilitators assisted with the sessions.

In the one-day sessions, managers heard that “leadership is action not position.” They were challenged as leadership teams to

lead with purpose, passion, presence and a plan. Inspired by the motivational and humorous “Fish Sticks” video—that tells the story of successful Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle, Wash.—they learned that leadership begins with seeing (understanding) the FIA vision.

During the sessions FIA director Howard discussed the FIA vision and values in a video that was seen by participants. He also discussed the “sphere of influence” and gave leadership style and the way we treat employees as example of things leaders can control.

Participants then worked as table teams and completed a team leadership self-assessment. From the perspective of their internal and external customers, as a team they identified their strengths and areas where there are opportunities for them to improve. They selected their top three priorities for improvement and began developing improvement action plans.

Each team rated itself on how members live the FIA values of customer focus, meeting employee needs, action oriented, long-term focus, integrity and teamwork. They brainstormed ways they can live the value they feel they currently need the most work to achieve.

Managers were told that all of them have strengths and can coach and support each other to live the vision and values. Each participant identified their strengths and the areas where they need coaching or support. Team members then added to each other’s list of strengths and celebrated what each person brings to their team.

Before leaving the session, teams identified how they will take leadership excellence back to their offices and continue their commitment to excellence.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. They saw as strengths of the session the opportunity for teamwork, involving all members of their management team, and sharing ideas with teammates. They also enjoyed the upbeat, interactive and positive atmosphere of the sessions.

As the result of discussion at the conferences and participant feedback, the FIA 2002 Vision has been modified. The new language for the FIA Vision is:

“FIA will be a local, state and national leader in human service delivery through employee commitment, customer focus, technology, innovation and effective partnerships.”

For further information about “Hooked on Excellence” or to request a session in your office, contact Julie Horn Alexander at (517) 373-4659 or send email to hornj@michigan.gov

Yes, we are “Hooked on Excellence”

Monroe County takes back tools learned in “Hooked on Excellence” conference

By Angie Jenerette, Director

Monroe County Family Independence Agency

Telephone (734) 243-7204

MONROE—We are really “Hooked on Excellence!” We have made so many changes since the training on Oct. 10.

One of the changes I’m proud involves family independence manager Carol Gose, who generously donated a red fish pillow. Freddie” the fish may be seen floating around the office. His ID badge states:

“This is Freddie the Fish from the video “Fish Sticks.” If you find a fellow manager who could use help from Freddie to get rid of a negative attitude that has slipped into the glory of the day – just give that person Freddie. Once the manager feels that they can let Freddie go, or they find someone who needs it more – pass it on. Whoever has Freddie at the time of a manager’s meeting, please bring him. If you no longer have a need or no one to pass him to – please return him to Carol Gose. He can be retrieved from Carol anytime.”

We have formalized the procedure here and are applying the concepts. Thanks for getting us “Hooked on Excellence.”



Carol Gose (left) with Angie Jenerette and Freddie the Fish.

Geake is new children’s ombudsman

Gov. John Engler appointed former state legislator and licensed psychologist Robert Geake as Michigan’s children’s ombudsman, effective Nov. 26. He succeeds Karen Quinn, who resigned.



Robert Geake

Geake, from Northville, has served since 1999 as an investigator in the Office of Children’s Ombudsman, investigating the handling of cases involving children in protective services, foster care and adoption services.

“Robert Geake brings with him a stellar background to this very important position,” said Engler Nov. 16. “He will put the interests of Michigan’s children first.”

The Office of Children’s Ombudsman is an independent agency established by P.A. 204 of 1994 with authority to investigate complaints about children in Michigan’s child welfare system. The office may investigate the actions, decisions, policies and protocols of the FIA and child placing agencies as they relate to a particular child. The ombudsman also makes recommendations to the governor, Legislature and FIA for changes in child welfare laws, rules, and policies.

Caught caring

Staff of Fullerton-Jeffries District Office make a difference in families lives

DETROIT—This Thanksgiving, 50 Wayne County FIA Fullerton-Jeffries District customer families received full Thanksgiving baskets. Inside each basket was a message signed by Josh Mack, manager, Fullerton-Jeffries District FIA.

The message said, “Dear Customer and Family: On behalf of the Fullerton-Jeffries FIA District Staff and the Fullerton-Jeffries Community Advisory Board, we hope that you and your family enjoy this Thanksgiving basket and accept this gift as an expression of caring from all of us. Have a Happy Thanksgiving.”

Mack sent staff a note thanking them for their generous participation in donating and preparing the baskets. “It is important to understand that you have made a major difference in the lives of many families,” he said. “Thank you so very much for caring.”

Family to Family pilots

State partners with Casey Foundation to join Family to Family network Programs similar to others in big American cities

By Susan Kelly, Family to Family State Coordinator
FIA Child and Family Services Administration
Telephone (734) 547-9164

Have you been frustrated by that difficult situation where a child has been removed from her family but there is no easy answer to the permanency question? Aren't cases in that category more often than not? Help, in the form of a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, may give us a hand with many of these pressing questions.

In November 2000 the Family Independence Agency received an initial grant of \$150,000 from the Casey Foundation with additional resources of approximately \$1 million to be made available over the next three years. These funds are targeted to Family to Family planning, implementation and state rollout.

Family to Family is a child welfare system reform initiative with a goal to place those children who are removed from their families, and only those who must be removed, with one permanent and stable family in the child's own community, until reunification with birth families can occur, or until the child is freed for adoption. A priority of the program is to reduce the number of children placed in congregate or institutional care.

Jim Nye, director of FIA Outstate Operations, has enthusiastically endorsed Family to Family.

"Family to Family will provide us with the tools we need to improve outcomes for our children and their families in the foster care system," he said.

A special aspect of this initiative is its focus on building collaboration and community partnerships, an approach Michigan human service agencies and their partners have found successful in recent years. This because children and families are best served when the child welfare system uses and builds on the strengths of the community.

"We must work with a community as a key partner if we want to keep kids and families attached to their natural support systems," said Jerome Rutland, director of Wayne Co. FIA. "The community has resources and wisdom to help us make better decisions about children who come to the attention of the child welfare system."

The Casey Foundation has dedicated significant resources that support efforts to reform the child welfare system, according to Casey Foundation senior associate John Mattingly.

"There has been a recognition for a number of years that the foster care system too often places children far from their homes, and that these children usually move multiple times," he said.

Research indicates children who have more frequent contact with their birth parents remain in their schools and continue their existing friendship and family networks also have a higher rate of reunification.

The Casey Foundation began work in some of the largest urban areas in the country because those communities have the greatest number of children in care and were hit the hardest by the increase in the foster care population in the 1980s. For that reason New York, Cleveland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Cincinnati were among the communities initially targeted. Building on the success in those communities, the Foundation believes the principles of Family to Family are also translatable to rural and suburban communities.

Research indicates children who have more frequent contact with their birth parents remain in their schools and continue their existing friendship and family networks also have a higher rate of reunification.

Family to Family has four key strategies:

- **Community partnership.** Family to Family builds on natural helping networks, neighborhood partners and the belief that there are strengths and resources in every community where children enter the child welfare system.
- **Neighborhood-based recruitment, retention, training and support of foster parents.** The number of foster parents recruited to be part of the Family to Family network has increased significantly. Retention of foster families has also improved as a result of the training and support systems developed. Birth parents are more able to maintain a relationship and keep a visitation schedule when their children are placed in their own neighborhood, community or county. Children are less traumatized by removal from their families if they are not also removed from their schools, neighborhoods and other supports that are familiar to them.
- **Self-evaluation.** Family to Family sites use data to drive the decisions about their systems, learn where children come from, where they are placed, and whether outcomes improve as a result of the initiative.
- **Team decision-making.** Both birth and foster parents are regularly consulted as an integral part of the team decision making process that impacts the child. Encouraging regular contact between birth and foster parents leads to more successful reunification for many children and their families.

Two counties, Wayne and Macomb, have been selected as the first demonstration sites for Family to Family in Michigan. In Macomb the initiative is targeted to South Warren, and in Wayne to Southeastern Village, which is a geographic area on the east side of Detroit. Its boundaries are Mack and the Detroit River, Mt. Elliott and Alter Road.

Both targeted areas have had significant numbers of families involved with the child welfare system and a high number of removals to out-of-home care. Patricia Rideout, lead consultant from the Casey Foundation to Michigan's Family to Family program, has been working side by side with Macomb and Wayne counties to provide resources and technical assistance.

Each county has hired a Family to Family coordinator and has begun work on the critical issues necessary for successful implementation including:

- Establishing effective community partnerships to support Family to Family.
- Increasing the number of foster families in the targeted areas and providing those families with key supports such as foster parent support groups.
- Training caseworkers on the elements of family meetings.

A state-level steering committee—chaired by Jim Beougher, director of Child and Family Services, Nye and Rutland—has been formed to ensure the success and sustainability of the initiative as it is replicated over the next several years. Members will meet quarterly and share their collective experience and common sense to serve as a reality check, and they will be primary advocates on the importance of making our foster care system more child-centered, neighborhood-based and family-focused.

Both Macomb and Wayne counties have local steering committees that are responsible for coordination issues with the targeted areas and for overseeing the committee progress.

“Family to Family offers significant improvement in our ability to positively impact the lives of at-risk children, their birth and foster families, and the entire community,” said Angelo Nicholas, director of Macomb County FIA. “It represents an opportunity whose time has really come.”

Beougher, who advocated with Casey to include Michigan as a partner state, believes it will serve as a trigger for private and public foster care services to be more aware of the positive outcomes when children are kept in their own neighborhoods and schools.

“I believe children will feel more secure and will be more successful when we are able to keep them in their familiar surroundings and schools,” he said.

For more information on the principles, strategies and specific tools for implementation of Family to Family please check the Casey Foundation's web site at www.aecf.org Local contacts are Stephanie Miller, Family to Family coordinator in Wayne County (telephone 313-256-2438 or 313-256-1815) and Dawn Walker, Family to Family coordinator in Macomb County (810-412-6132).



Guide to nursing homes

Resource for consumers of long-term care

Three Michigan organizations have published the 2001 "Consumer Guide to Michigan Nursing Homes".

The guide is a resource for residents, families and other persons using long-term care services. It represents and lists all licensed nursing homes in Michigan.

It is useful for consumers, hospital discharge planners, physicians and others as a comprehensive resource to find nursing homes. The guide helps evaluate some 280 nursing homes with comments from family members on the quality of care provided.

It also includes the most recent annual state inspection done on each home, prior to publication of the guide, published as a joint product by the Health Care Association of Michigan, Michigan Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council.

For more information contact Reginald Carter with the Health Care Association of Michigan by telephone at (517) 627-1561; by fax at (517) 627-3016; or by email through regcarter@hcam.org

Michigan.gov now our email address

Website continues to improve, will become sole access to government

During November and December, state employee email addresses changed to name@Michigan.gov and everyone began sending and receiving mail that way.

This is the first part of an effort to organize customer access to state government and state employees through the single portal **Michigan.gov**. In the months to come, access to all state website information will be through this single portal.

In November, Michigan.gov was selected one of the 10 best state websites in the U.S. for providing citizens and businesses with online government services and information. Check out the story at <http://www.centerdigitalgov.com>

On Nov. 13, new enhancements to Michigan.gov included the e-store pilot shopping cart for products of the Department of Natural Resources. Customers can purchase posters and patches at the e-store (<http://MI-Mall.Michigan.gov/DNR>).

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